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PART II.

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*Hearnestly recommended to the serious Attention of my Fellow  
Labourers and Fellow Townsmen, the honest, well-meaning  
and industrious Mechanics and Manufacturers of the Town of  
Birmingham.*

VERY FAMILIAR LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

MR. JOHN NOTT,

*Button-Burnisher, Steelhouse-lane, Birmingham.*

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BY ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG, WHIP-MAKER,  
AND ABEL SHARP, SPUR-MAKER.

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A Rumour raised of Nothing soon vanisheth; and the End of  
it is nothing else, but to make the *innocency of him* who is  
slandered to be *more admired*.

A SAYING OF MY UNCLE'S.

Hearken unto me. I will also shew you my Opinion.

ABEL SHARP.

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BIRMINGHAM

PRINTED; AND SOLD BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS.

(Price Four-pence)



## VERY FAMILIAR LETTERS.

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### LETTER IV.

FRIEND NOTT,

**T**RUTH is a salve that heals all sores, and a coat that will never make any man ashamed. So then I don't flinch from telling ye my mind, from the beginning of great A, down to the end of Amper Zad. I hope no offence for what is past, as I dean't mean that any thing should stick in your gizzard as the saying is. Old friends are not soon parted. No---No---you and I don't mean to be like your---your tip-top folks that are *on* to-day and *off* to-morrow---We are not like your *rooks* that'll never fly but where there is something *to feed on*. But if there weren't a vejable or an apple-pie in the world, we should for all the world be just like the two ends of an egg that always go together. Fast bind, fast find.

But then d'ye see, friend John, we don't hum and ha over matters like our gentry. They come with "your sarvice" in one hand, and "rabbit ye" in the t'other; but we don't cut and clip our words as tho' God A'mighty put our tongue within our teeth to laf at us. Mayn't master Armstrong take heart then, friend John, that thof he don't like your goings on, as *you may see*, yet plain dealing won't break the pitcher and spill the liquor? Truth you see may be blam'd but can't be shamed; and as my schuel maister Scrivens used to say, when he had beaten a poor naughty child---there! there! Sirrah! take that for

your pains, and be down in the mouth an you will. But mind ye now, He that won't hear the *whip* from a *friend*, shall wince at the *spur* from his *foe*!

I suppose you are all agape like an oyster, to know why I writes again, and how this book of letters comes to be a partner-sheep affair: now I'll let you into the light on't. You must know as soon as a man cou'd say, Here's at ye, a mort of folks fair and foul, gentle and simple, all hurry-scurry---helter-skelter---tag-rag and bob-tail, scampered down to my printing-mon's, as though old nick was in 'em, or some pepper was under their tails. Ods bobs and boddikins! you would not ha' thought they had wanted the *whip*! Four-penn'eth of whipcord says one---Alexander's lash for an horse, cries a second---Master Armstrong's thong for an *ass*, bellows a third like the Yardelay bull. For truth, they seemed so shannied that none knew what I meant but the *last*. Now mind ye friend, the whole tote on 'em lick'd their chaps to see Alex. and so for a jot of time, I was mortal like a swing-gate; for I cou' not tell which way to take (which wou'd you Jean?) either to make my fortune by having my soul stared out o' my body for wonderment's sake and such; or make *whips*, with *Alex. put at the butt end* on 'em, and *friend Nott at t'other*, and trade in books of my *own* composture, as ye may call it.

In this quandary up comes Able Sharp the spur-maker; who begins to coax and wheedle like any thing, and makes a good push to get up my sleeve, as the saying is. So Alex. says he, there's the deuce of an outcry all through the town for *whips*---the more the merrier---them people you made 'em for, are capering head over heels, hither and thither, just like a whirl-de-wind;



whirl-de-wind ; some's gone into *Small-broke street* ; some this way, and some that---some to the farmers and country-folks to have a jerk at their black-cattle. And tack't to all that, they say your friend, John Nott, is so deadly moved by a pain i' the bowels, that apple-pie (hot or cold no matter for that) shall never play *old satan*, or *the priest* with him, as long as the world stands, to say against his conscience, if by the blessing of God he can but get clean fingers again.

Hah ! Alexander, quoth Sharp, if you had let me into the secret of your going to be a book-maker, I'd ha' gi'n ye a lift as ye may say. You might have cut these parsons into pound pieces, and proved the old proverb good, Dung does no good till it is spread. If I had half the strength of your arm, I'd a made 'em wince again : Howbeit, if you're willing I'll stick my spurs in their sides, and see what that will do. Well Johnny, after this pr'amble, we became *one* as the saying is, and this is to let you to know, as how I Alexander Armstrong sells the *whips*, and my partner Able Sharp the *spurs* ; and we means to live cheek by jowl under the same roof ; that if any country gentleman should want to drive any *lazy* cattle *into* church, or any *unruly* ones *from* church, and my *whips* won't do, *Sharp's spurs* may. And as you have told Mr. Priestley, you are got up in the world, I can't 'frain from saying, we means to get a pair of pattens, one for Able, and another for me, from the king ; and then do ye see, the trade's all our own. And may'nt the king, by-the-by, when our name's up, give us a rare order to whip the *bishop* out of *their stalls* ? Hey ?

I Armstrong writes ye this kind letter, that you might not be taken by surprize, or frited out of your

wits as they say the Rev. Mr. Falstaff was in one of the old king's days.

I am,

Your sincere friend,

ALEX. ARMSTRONG.

Postscript. Master Sharp's fingers itch, and so I let's him write the next. And you may tell Betty that there's nothing but snap---snap---snap, all over town and country; and the dear folks like me so they mean to break me down for my whipcord; and some have just popt the question whether I won't condescend to sell *halters*, for they say they ben't to hang their beasts, but only to *tie 'em up*. And, O dear! my memory is vastly treach'rous—tell little Dick, I means to give him a whip into the bargain for his daddy's sake.

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## LETTER V.

MR. NOTT,

**T**HIS tells ye, I ha' seen your Very Familiar Letters. Very, vastly, nashion-family-liar; for to scrape acquaintance with a great mon's name, you have fathered a fine *bag of falsities* upon him; but as the saying is, *a liar won't be believed though he spake the truth*. Did you never read the fable about this at your school in the spelling-book?

Vastly *earnest* you be among our fellow-labourers. But mind ye now, if you be'nt smothered in your own dust; nothing I promise ye can save ye, but running away like *a dog that has burnt his tail*. And then

then as you say, we are all *honest* to the back-bone; for we takes nobody's *milk* or *potatoes* from 'em. And oh! pray let me ax ye, why deant ye say you wrote your book to the *pitiful* mechanics of Brummigham; for look ye, we poor folks don't *extortion* upon one another. No, no, we dont wait to see, as some folks do, how many eggs are laid in a day in a country-man's pig-sty, or over his oven. Rabbit it! if I lived at Sillel, I'd catch the parson napping as we say, and make *him lay as many eggs as he steals away*, or I'd see the reason on it! We whip-makers and button-burnishers, and spur-makers, and the whole tote of us, when any body on us been ailing say, well neighbour can I lighten your burdens for you? Hows Kate? hows little black-eyed Susan? for God's sake do tell me. And if I can make bad better, I'll strain a point to do it. You calls us *well-meaning*. Why that's true again; for we eant like your sharpening fellows who try to take people in. We dont say to gentle-folks, we'll marry and christen and bury for a groat, and then take a shilling! this is too bad. And then we dont make believe to favour poor folks, and then let 'em to know, if they dont spend all their savings to make a *to do* at making the child a christian, we shant church 'em again.

And then do you see, as you say mortal right, we are all *industrious*; for we tug and strive ourselves to death's door to keep out of jail; for the constables wont favour us *poor* folks. But here's the beauty of it, John; we all eat our own *gettings*. But I don't find any of these rectors are great farmers; they are neither plowing or sowing, but they are nashion good hands at stuffing their barns with poor folks' corn. You know, John, we that are sived up so close on  
work-

work-a-days, loves to take a sober walk into the country when Sunday comes. Last Sunday I and Alexander took Yardeley and Sillil road. Thinking our heavenly Father would not take it amiss to go to church and say our prayers in the country, we ax'd a good looking gentleman farmer, which style took us to the church?—Church! church!—We ha' no church *worth going to*. We are all house-protestants. Our folks ha' got it into their heads that our rectors are all a *swarm of locusts* sent by our governors to devour the crops of their farms up, and as my farm isn't worth a louse *now*, I shant spare 'em; for, blest the Lord, they ha'nt got our tongues. As sure as you are a living man, we can't pay our way, and poor children in our parish are just famished. And whether sleeping or waking they are always breaking their poor mammy's heart strings; crying, mammy, milk—milk, mammy. As sure as my name's old honesty, I thinks there will be a rising among us soon, for we are *half anotimies now*. Ay, ay! the golden days are over; and this puts me in mind of what my grandfather used to say, as how the rat-catcher told him that he met with all sorts of varmin in his travails; such as *black rats*, Norway rats, water rats, and so on; but said my grandfather, depend on't, depend on't, you'll never rid the country of varmin, till you keep out of your houses and barns the *worst of all rats*, commonly called Q—rats\*. My

\* I thinks old honesty's grandfather bore a little too hard upon poor Q—rats; for do ye see, they are for all the world like the *jackall* I seed at our Brummigeham fair; the show man told us as how, he was the *lion's provider*, and that it was as much as his head was worth, to touch a morsal 'afore the *lion* had got all he wanted. But mayhap too, now its come into my head, old honesty's grandfather meant, by Q—rats, *scratching, devouring parsuns, of every sort*.

dame



dame says they are the very devil to eat apple-pie and suck eggs.

And now I be upon it, I wonder our parliament-men, that they say ha' got such great farms, dont take sides with their tenants, and make some laws to keep the fingers of parish priests from *pilfering*, which in my mind is a plaguay deal *worse* than robbing upon the high ways. But as I said afore, the constables are asfear'd of such folks as have got a friend at court, as they say the Sillil rectifier has. But these parsons and court people are all holding together to *serve themselves*, and *plunder* you and I poor folks. Why as true as I'm here, I should not wonder if they were to hang you and I, John, if they could get any thing by it; but saix, if the one did not finger the chink, and the 'tother fleece the sheep, you'd find them as far asunder as Botomry Bay is from Tyburn.

You see, tho' my name is Abel Sharp, I heant galloped over much ground yet. Armstrong, to my mind, has given you a fine dressing; but as we are now become partners, I and he means to whip and spur all the blood out of your body. Save we shant make any account of such words as these in your book, 'Betty's a nation sensible woman,' 'My *wife's* notion is to my liking,' 'Betty would be glad to have a little chat with Mrs. Priestley,' and so and so, for as the saying is, 'We must never mind a TRIFLE.' I ask your pardon Betty.

I am now come to the advertisement to your book, which tells, as how your letters got up into the hands of a *principal faction* in this town. And as how the *faction* believed they contained the sentiments of *their order*. And how *they* burnished it as ye may say; and a'ter that the *principal faction* send 'em out

with *all their striking imperfections on their head!* Well said Mr. Faction and Malefactor: many true words are spoken in jest. Now John, you had better have had nothing to do with those malefactors; for as the saying is, *let every thief make his own speech.*

And then do ye see, John, as you did not make books for a *polite* public, but for the *lower sort of publics*, or gin shops and alehouses; the rookery had no business to be meddling to make *you plain* as the advertisement says; do you see I'd tell 'em pat without any mincing the matter, you John Nott, deant think they'd have put *their cloven foot* into *your dirty puddle*; it was enough for them to *keep cutting their own horns*, and their tails too one may say; but I see, as the saying is, *what is bred in the bone is never out of the flesh.*

To be plain, John, I know you love good eating and drinking as well as our parsons done; or else there are lions in the tower, as the saying is; for you tells us, you never works a'ter six, but sits down to smoke your pipe, drink ale, and so. Why do ye know it is all the town's talk, that a great black bird, which the Londonners call a *rook*, sat upon your vice bench, and *croaked* what you should say to Master Priestley; and I confirms it; for your friend Alexander says, you'd be a mighty burnisht man if 'twas not for bad counsel; and he knows the folks now whose *viper's spittle* you licked up.—Well thought on:—You and they have done just as the monkey did by the cat's paw, who wanted a tater out of the fire.—Better still:—A good some weeks ago, there was a *chattering puppet* in the town, that if you'd ax it if it deant think seditious, time-serving, underhand parsons, were'nt to be hated by every body, it wou'd say downright, without *a word of a lie*, or any hammering

mering and stabbing, "Ay, ay." But I warrant ye, if I had knock'd the puppet o'th head *somebody* cou'd have given the answer. But in troth, I bean't satisfied about their putting such low stuff into your yead to send to Master Priestley. If I were to answer for it to-morrow, I could not think how it came about, that men who had *a univarsity education* cou'dn't *fight their own battles better*. But I s'pose as the saying is, they thought it better *to die in a whole skin*, than go to *court with a broken yead*! you knowen as well as me John, that they can't contradict what Master Priestley says, without doing as old Scratch did when he tempted Eve, telling stories. Master Priestley, do ye see, nocks all they say as flat as a tomb-stone; and what wont lay quiet, he drives afore him, just as Alexander's whip does your chaff.

To be sure 'twas mighty *charitable* in 'em to buy up such a parcel of your books, and send 'em to all the public housen; for this is the only thing I remember they come within a mile of being like our blessed Saviour; and that is n't very near. You know the Bible says, he used to be a nashon great crony with the publicans. One of these black legs picks up your books at a tap-house t'other day, and iays, Well done, John Nott! a deadly good thing! Now this is as true as Christ is my Saviour; and I hope he'll be their's, but *they don't go the way for it*. Well this puts me in mind of Bet (not your Betty) who when she takes a cup of ale, says before she tips it off, *Come Betty, here's to you*. Deant the creature know, that deadly good thing was his dear living self? It is like a dog eating his own vomit, as 'tis in the Bible.

You'll take notice, I shan't write the next as I don't chuse to spur a jaded horse too much.—But you may see by this my name is,

ABLE SHARP.



*Postscript.* O pray, as I wou'd not be thought mean on by my partner, does not little Jack never ride out with his daddy to church? as I means to give him a pair of spurs.

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## LETTER VI.

FRIEND NOTT,

YES, as you say, it was deadly kind of Master Priestley to give us trade's people a bit of advice.----We have long been teached, that God A'mighty don't care for us---that he only sent us to burnish buttons and clean stables---that if we *have* got a soul, it's hardly worth looking a'ter; and for this reason I s'pose 'tis our parsons don't visit us poor folks, except at *christnings and buryings*. And then do ye see, when do our clergy makes books for us? No---No, *they know a trick worth two of that*; but as the saying is, when the belly is full the bones will be at rest. Now, what does Master Priestley? what does he? why he says, if we don't all get to heaven it shan't be thrown in his teeth; and then, which vastly pleases us, we shan't be put upon, and be as thof' our eyes were pulled out and our ears cut off. Nothing like it---as the saying is, every man for himself, and God for us all. We may ask questions, and give answers of our *own making*; but then we must *at times*, hear and see, and say nothing. For my part I shall never forget the mon as long as I live, for they say, he 'en't one *of us* as many parsons be;



be; for I have heard say, that Maister Priestley belongs to what they call the king's club; and to a mort of your larned clubs in outlandish countries. Now I shou'd think Maister Priestley must have a *fine deal of know*; for they say, they lets in nobody but kings and princes, and filosofhers, and mayhap John, now and then a *bishop*, *when they can find 'em knowing enough*.

It has just hit me as I am a Dutchman.---And so your deadly good friend the Presbyterian told you, Mr. Priestley had trimmed your bishops and parsons, and made them sore for a twelvemonth. Hey! is this it? don't you know John, Maister Priestley told your Mr. Burn in a piece that goes afore his book of letters to him, as how as soon as he cou'd read his ABC, he went to schooling to a clergyman who loved him so nashionally, that he *stuck to him like wax to his dying day*; and maugre all this, *vicars, and rectors, and doctors*, and all your *topping* parsons clung about him as bees about honey, as the saying is.

And do you think Maister Priestley loves flogging the parsons because they wear a black coat, and teach people to turn about to the east, as you may say? No no, or they wou'd not ha' lov'd him so: but then faix, I hope you don't think a parson is to go about *like Satan seeking whom he may devour*, and swallow us down as though we were all pismires, and never fetch him a somerset in his paunch? I take Maister Priestley's part, not because his name is Joe Priestley, but because, *I don't like any human flesh should be put upon*. Mr. Burn, whom the folks say was once a stay-maker, or such like, has been of late days at Master Priestley's whipping-post. And there are such a many brought there every day, that I don't wonder

wonder *you* were afeard from his whipping post looks. If you may say so, a burnt child dreads the fire, and then as you say, you're afeard Maister Priestley don't laugh much, and pines away at seeing others so sleek. Ads! How *can* the good man laugh, when such a huge number are coming and going *from the whipping*. Why it is enough to make an *anatomy* of him! And then do ye see, some wants more and some less, and the mischief on it is, a many take to their old ways again, for all the world like your bad-folks who come to an untimely end. Do you think, John, any man can laugh the breath out of his body, when *this is the case*? But I hears that Mr. Priestley means to burn amort of 'em for the future in *the forehead*; then you'll all know *who is your enemy*.

And so you've heard say, that if a man does as Master Priestley bid him, he'll soon be no better than a heathen or a hottentot. Don't I tell ye, hearsay deserves to be hanged? take this and what follows in the right light: *Itching ears do swallow many wrongs*. And I have heard as how, *slanderers in former times were marked in the forehead with a red hot iron*. A nashion good custom, faith! Look afore you leap, Mr. Johnny, or *you* may get a burn, and Betty may be frightened, and then your poor dear babies may be like their daddy. And then the poor labourers shall have fine fun. Don't think that I hav'n't read about the hottentots. There is a deal about 'em in the Acts. They didn't believe *any thing* about the Father Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord. But when their neighbours died outright, and warnt in fits and trances to come back again, the hottentots believed they never would have their breath more, to see  
their

their uncles and grandfathers, and all their relations in the t'other world, and talk old matters over again. Now, friend Nott, you knowed when you said this, Master Priestley preached up God the Father, and Christ the Saviour, and the tother world, as though he was not to speak another minute, he does it so earnest. Ax any of the poor foks who hears him, if every word of this ben't true? One would not think you had ever been christened at church, or meeting, to hear you tell such *falsities*.

Well, no sins comes alone, here is another *lie* John. You seems to say, and wants us to believe, Master Priestley called the Presbyterians *negers*. Now as true as I'm a living man, any one may see and read with his own eyes, what I have. In the fourteenth page of Master Priestley's first book of very kind Letters to me among the rest, you have the truth, and nothing but the truth, and all as flat *against you as light is to darknes*. Adad, this is a *neger's trick* of your's, *that wont wash off* I'll promise you; but when we Presbyterian negers are on Sunday as white as a sheet, you'll be as black as a crow. There's no washing a black-more white, as the saying is. You may tells us, *me no neger*; but nobody will part with their eye-sight to believe you.

And so, Mr. Priestley you think grows *witty* in his old age; but then you tell us mayhap he may be *melancholy mad*; and you knows for *fartin*, without any mayhap, that he has been *plaguily crost*, and *deucedly vexed*; and you are afeard, *he pines away and dont laugh much*. How now, Johnny? I am afeard your ale is too fat, and your head too giddy, to let you write downright common sence. If I were sure you wou'dn't be glum at it *I should say, a liar ought to have*



*have a good memory.* Mrs. Betty may I be so bold as to tell you to look in your nashion clever husband's face, and just say in your way, None of your shilly shally butterflies for me, give me a good strait forward man d'ye see; and then you'll fix the bell *on the right horse*, as the saying is: But, mayhap, he wont be quite so fond of bringing your tongue into print—for my aunt loved to say, when I first went a courting, Remember, nesew, a woman's tongue will pierce as deep as both her eyes. Hah! ant this true John as to Betty?

And so you ha' ta'en into your head to tell us, that folks are generous in letting Master Priestley print his *opinions*, and never abusing him for it! Yes faix! wonderous generous! I've said you have ta'en it into your head, but, an if you please, *who put it there first?* for I'm as sure as a *Glutton* will eat *Salt*, *John Nott*, the button-burnisher, would never have thought of this figgary whatever his lads and wenches may. And so I s'pose a man maunt say now a-days, *his soul is his own!* And if so, why to be plain with you, I'd much sooner have my soul sent back again. For thof the saying be, you may keep a thing to *look at*, yet as I never sees it, I dont love to be made a game on. And so, John, if you had an opinion about buttons that pleased ye vastly, and would make all in your way as rich as a bishop, ye maunt mention it out for the life of ye. This of your's is *worferer and worferer*. And so, when any of the church folk gives away their opinions about conformation, as you know *they did some while ago* in this town, we may, if we dont have a *fit* of generosity, break their bones and crunch 'em to mommucks. And why forsooth: Why? because as how you and  
I and



I only thinks confarming such poor sinners as we makes *bad worse*; and then they tells me for sartain, as soon as you have the bishop's hand within an inch of your head, you are as thof' you wern't baptized, and had no godfathers and godmothers to take your part. And must be left like to stand upon your own bottom; who that sins as you and I do would like to part with our godfathers? No, no—no such generosity as you talk off for me. I hope all the clergymen in this town will out with every thing that will in *their opinion*, make us keep at home a little more, and not scold, and get fuddled a Saturday night, to our shame be'n it spoken. I say that will, in *their opinion*; for you know, you and I ant forced to eat hot apple-pie and oysters of their getting, *will or nill*. I say, I hope they'll *spake out*, without *doing any thing that desarves abusing as you say*. Now to be a little home, John, like friends that ant afeard of a wospes nest; a man may tell ye as many opinions as wou'd fill a bushuel and *not a word of a lie in them all*; but what does a man deserve who makes a little book of letters on purpose—I say *on purpose to set folks together by the ears*: and as thof' he didn't know the meaning of the Lord's Prayer, when Master Priestley's sense stand out for all the world, *like the nose in your face*. I have showed you that your book is crambed full of crankers, that I warrant ye wou'd make Annanias and Sapphira's hair stand an end as the saying is, as bad as they were, for they told falsties to get some thing from the church, but you to bring grice to the mill as we say. Now as bad as you have been, we dont *mean to abuse you*, except calling you *by your right name be it*. *Here's generosity for you if you will.*—One saying of my uncle's,

Take

Take heed of a liar, for it is *time lost to be led by him.*

Now I and partner have done over all of your first letter ; and as one may say, Whips oft used don't last for ever, I shall conclude ; hoping a blessing to my endeavours, and telling you I am ready to drink to your reformation in what ye like.

ALEX. ARMSTRONG.

Whip-Maker.

## LETTER VII.

Master Nott,

**B**OOTED and spurred I Able Sharp am going to ride over your second Letter. The first gap I come to is at the *outset*, where you seem to think Mr. Madan should have thrown more into the Presbyterians teeth than he has done. Now do ye see, how most monstrous different Master Madan is to you John—You want to make us believe you and Mr. Madan are two as the saying is. And as thof' you *were birds of a feather.* But I know Mr. Madan better than to believe, he wants a *button-burnisher for his elbow-jogger.* I loves *this* rector better than the *i'other* and so do the folks in the *country*; for though as the saying is, *We cant tell whether the moon be made of green cheese, and the i'other can, 'cause he takes tythes out of the moon,* yet all we plain people know what's what too. *We know Mr. Madan is a gentleman every inch of him;* and if he had known you were

were making a book about him, he wou'd not have advertised an answer first and *last* as they say he did, but have told you to have burnt you piece or like a *Glutton* to be sure eat it up, and not let it get into the hands of a *principal faction*, in this town. May Sharp speak his mind? You must know, John, I thinks Master Madan *did mighty right to preach and publish his opinions*, but then *so I do the other folks*. And where's the harm on it? flint and steel strike out light, John.

Oh heart's alive! I ha' just hit it to a tee. And so you think the Presbyterians went brawling here, and brawling there, and brawling all the world over. And so if folks be *trod* on they maunt cry out? And more they wou'd not, if you had fairly squeegeed their breath out of their body. Now, I warrant ye, the church goers didn't *brawl* at all? Why the very bells and bottles *brawl'd* after 'em. The topping folks, and the king, and all his children (God bless 'em) ant to take our victuals out of our mouths; and never let us shew ourselves at court while we behave well.—No, no; if they do they must be talkt to, do ye see. Your fine people are like the tops of your buttons, mighty fine, as I said, and the Presbyterians are the *shanks*; and prithee tell us spur-makers, if *the king would wear a single button without a shank on?*

But as the saying is, there's a use for every thing under the sun; and we dont wear spurs for nothing. If the Presbyterians *were fond of brawling*, wou'dn't they say more about some parsons' going on than they do? Now they tells me that a mighty good Presbyterian justis was desired to let a wench sware a rap against one of your parsons in the country. But the justisses heart  
was

was so cut at it, that he begged and pray'd they'd *hush it all up*, for 'twould so bespatter the parson's name, that if he *had any shame* in him, he'd fly into outlandish parts, or as the saying is, hide his head in a furz-buth, as long as he lived: Was not this good for evil now? Now woould you believe all Yarley church people have been *brawling* ever since that infarmity shewed itself: You that are so mighty encouraging as to read our two books, if ye please to talk it about as how you want to know that for *scar-tain that the Presbyterians are not brawlers*, you shall hear another part of the same tune, for 't isn't like common sing-song; here's no end to the parts, and store's no fore.

And so John, Master Priestley has been deucedly vexed by the parsons of your church! heh! Now you may know he'll speke his mind, and I shall speke mine, for that's *our birth-right* as we say. There is a piece of advice as old as Adam, *dont be vexed by a fool*: and I shou'd s'pose as how the *number* of 'em cant make any difference as to taking it. Heh? besides all that, if I may mention the Bible, when men say put me into the priest's office for a bit of bread, they dont love to lose their longings; but frightened out of their seventy senses, for fear as how a Presbyterian parson might have stuck his knife into a loaf, they go and cry, and whine to the king's servants, for fear the testy act as you call it, should be put an end to. I want to know who would not be testy when they are starving, and these parsons, that the Bible says, are to *treat every body*, wont let a poor dog touch a crumble, but be always crying out to folks, Give, give.

Here's



Here's something pat home that I cant 'frain from telling you : When I was selling spurs t'other day at Sillel, the farmers told me (for what we *bate* most is always uppermost) that their rector, faix, had given 'em a bold stroke *at first setting off*. And if my memory be as good as I means it should, this was his *first sermon*. To cut my meaning short, he said, like from the book of Malachi, *Bring ye all the tythes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house*. Now tell me John, isn't it enough to make a man testy, and to vex his life out of his body, to be *always giving and never getting*? Depend on it, you may overload any ass in the world : and if the farmers should once say, "*We wont bear our burdens,*" the tythe's all their own. Take a piece of advice;—don't be priest ridden John, neither by rectors nor Q—rats: my uncle, who was a goodish sort of a man, but always kick'd, and flinch'd, and bounc'd, at being excised upon, used to say, he didn't love parsons nor pigeons, for, says he, *one untiles the house, and the other eats all the side out*.

How cou'd you be so *soft*, John, as to talk of a man's shooting sparrows *in the dead o'night*; when, the saying is, 'twas so dark a man could not see his own nose, and all the sparrows were gone to roost? This puts me in mind of the Dutchman's biting his own nose. To be sure, as the parsons teach us to believe, a man may bite his own nose, or shoot sparrows in pitch dark when a man can't see his own nose, *safe God*. Now do tell me John, if a parson did tell father this parlous tale upon you? for, as the saying is, *like master like man*; for in my conscience, if I think any body else wou'd think of *sparrows at mid-night*.

*night. Sparrows, John, are deadly enemies to tythes and parsons.*

Ads! my partner has drubb'd ye soundly about Joseph and John the baptist. As the old saying is, one lie makes many, and so when you begun to slander, you loved it so, that you were determined to have a belly full on't. If *Armstrong* had been *Sharp*, he wou'd have told ye as how if he had printed a book, and happened to say out of the Bible, "Give me John's head in a charger;—I say, if because your name is *John Nott*, you'd ha' told every body he mean't *you*; adad! if he had gone a little farther into the story and said, "and they went and *beheaded John*; I s'pose you wou'd have played the Irishman with us, and *danc'd about the town to tell folks you had lost your head*; and forsooth as you say, 'twould be none but a true story.

And so they tells you, Mr. Russell wont be eas'till he has made Birmingham a corporation town. And I s'pose if they had told you, *you had'nt got an eyes in your head, you would believe 'em, tho' it seem you can see to shoot in the dark*. But as the saying is every man believes what will serve his turn. Didn't you know Mr. Russell is one of the *fastest friends* our town has got? No corporations for Master Russell. *He loves hard working folks too well for that*. And as the saying is, the more the merrier. Besides, again, your people that want Birmingham corporation, are your folks that care for nothing, the saying is, but to be as fat and lazy as an alderman. And who be they, prithee?

What a nashion strange tale John, you tell about Mr. Burke. And so, Master Priestley's mighty good friend turn'd tail upon him because he gave his gentlefol

gentlefolks' liquor, instead of Birmingham ale? A mighty good friend indeed John? You may be near the mark; for when I read the newspaper at our club, I thinks I sees his face like a *weathercock*, blown about by every wind of church and state. *Then where is his tail*, John? Why sometimes *against the bishops*, and sometimes *against the king*. A mighty good friend indeed Johnny. Well, you may take him *tail* and all an you will; for as an old copy says, *No designing man can be a true friend*. To tell ye downright, I should as soon think of finding a pair of spurs in a butterfly, as a *fast* friend in Master Burke.

Well! I sees I must skip a mortal many things in your book! but mayhap my spurs may make you wince again.

About Master Priestley's changing the name of the place where he lives at, from Foul-lake to Fair-hill. Now to be sure, when a parson has got so fair a name as he has, he may change the name of any place. But he ha'n't the merit of it. I thought, John, you had known more about your own neighbourhood than that comes to. Do'n't you remember one Darbyshire? Why it was he that built that house. He was a churchman, and a conjuror, and had dealings with the devil. Now folks nam'd it *Foul-lake after his foul deeds*. Which to be sure were very many, but I shan't mention 'em, as the poor man is gone dead, or his dough is baked, as the saying is. Some years ago, this Darbyshire wanted to sell his house, but no body would buy it, *unless this Foul-lake or Devil's brimstone-pot was removed*. So one night, Darby and his old friend completed this job, and set this foul stinking lake near down at our *parsonage house* in Smallbrook-street. And from that time to this, in which

which I, Abel Sharp, writes this, it has been deemed a curse to that neighbourhood. Soon after, there was a Quaker bought Darbyshire's house; a man of very fair name too; famous for having as fine and as many children as our king: *Then it was folks christen'd it FAIR-HILL*; and this name it is likely to keep, unless Darbyshire should move it again.

Time and tide tarry for no man; and as my orders in town and country are so many, I shall get 'em up the beginning of next week. Only observing to you, John, and all good people, for your learning, *In little meddling lieth much rest*. Tell the principal faction *this*.

My hand,

ABEL SHARP,

And mine,

ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG.

*Friday Morning.*



THE END.